A

LETTER

FROM A

GENTLEMAN in the CITY

TO A

GENTLEMAN in the COUNTRY,

ABOUT THE

Odiouſneſs of Perſecution.

WHEREIN

The Riſe and End of the Penal Laws for Religion in this Kingdom, are conſider'd.

Occaſioned by the late Rigorous Proceedings againſt Sober Diſſenters, by certain Angry Juſtices

IN THE

COUNTRY.

It is the Part of the Chriſtian-*Religion to Suffer, and not to make People Suffer for Religion,* Tertul. Apol.

Printed in the YEAR, 1687.

111.

THE LETTER.

SIR,

THE News of a Perſecution meerly for a matter of Religion, at this time a day, when the whole Nation appears profeſſedly to diſlike it; and the giving countenance to Informers (who are the Peſt of every Nation, and the common Enemies of Property) to the Prejudice of Peaceable and Trading People, makes your Friends, who have had notice of your late Troubles, ſuſpect that there is ſomething in your caſe more than ordinary.

Had this fallen out in ſome remote Country, where no Informer had ever yet appeared, we might have conceived, that through Ignorance that ſort of Devil might have been miſtaken for an Angel of Light; and that upon his bare Averrment, ſome well-meaning Perſons, even againſt their own Experience, might have been induced to miſtake their Peaceable Neighbours for Dangerous Incendiaries, and unworthy to enjoy their own proper Goods. But to ſee that ſort of Creature concerned

a Country ſo near *London* and *Weſtminſter*, as not to be capable of knowing what Informers are, how deteſtable their Trade, how inconſiderable their Power, how generally indigent and diſſolute, how mean their Skill, how little they know more than to ſubborn Witneſſes to commit Perjuries, which are diſcovered to their Confuſion, is that which raiſed Wonder in ſome of your Friends, to ſo great an height, that they generally requeſt from your own hand the true ſtate of your Caſe in all its Circumſtances, to the end they may know, whether there be any thing which can diſſer it from the common Caſes of Perſecution meerly for Religion; from which the generality of the Country-Gentlemen of *England* (and particularly thoſe of the Country where you live) do commonly profeſs to have as great an abhorrency, as they have from Depopulating of Countries, which is the Effect that ſuch Perſecutions muſt of neceſſity produce. In the mean time, do not I pray take me to be one, who think it ſtrange to hear of Troubles; what hath been formerly, may happen again without Aſtoniſhment; and you are too well known to be thought to be ſurprized or afraid.

Well did that Perſon conſider the Creature *Man*, who diſtinguiſhed him into two parts, viz. *the Man*, and *the Beaſt*: But it were happy for Mankind, if the *Beaſt* were leſs imperious and cruel: In truth, it is rare to find where *the Man* is allowed to have any power in Acting; every thing ſeems too much to be governed by *the Beaſt*, and by the Tyranny of its inordinate Paſſions and Senſes.

And yet where ſhall one find a ſingle Perſon in the World, who calls himſelf a *Chriſtian*, or that Party of Men who deſire to be eſteemed *Chriſtians*, but he and they will readily grant that Principle, Mat. 7. 12. *All things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do even ſo to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets?* and that other Principle, Rom. 3. 8. *Let us not do Evil that Good may come*, to be Goſpel-Principles, and obliging to all Mankind?

There is not a Politician or States-man, nor a Government any where, that owns *Chriſtianity* to be the true Religion, but confeſſeth

111

feſſeth, That in the Council of the *Jews*, which was aſſembled in order to the Perſecuting of the Apoſtles for matters of meer Religion, *Gamaliel* adviſed prudently, and according to the Principles of true Religion, *Acts* 5. *Let them alone, for if this Counſel or this work be of Men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, we cannot overthrow it, leaſt happily we be found even to Fight againſt God.* They will all confeſs readily, when preſſed with theſe charitable and peaceable Principles; that the Spirit of Perſecuting for meer Religion, is a Spirit of Injuſtice, as not doing to others as our ſelves would be done unto; and a Spirit of Diffidence and Incredulity, refuſing to truſt God, and his Providence, with the Defence and Juſtification of what is Profeſſed to be of God: And yet it is hard to find that ſingle Perſon, and much more to name, that Community or Government amongſt *Chriſtians*, now in being, whoſe practice, when they have opportunity and power, are not contrary to their Principles. And not only ſo, but they will take upon them to juſtifie ſuch practices to be conſiſtent with, nay, even duties, unto which they are obliged by that pure Religion, which they take upon them to profeſs to the whole World.

But to the end I may not be eſteemed preſumptuous, or uncharitable in what I here aſſert, and in regard it is impoſſible to produce evident proofs for what I ſay, as touching ſingle Perſons; let us a little examine the matter, as to Parties and Governments, taking this for granted, that every particular Party calls it ſelf a true Church, or the true Church of *Chriſt*. If what is here urged of differing Churches ſhall be proved true, the preſumption will ſtand very ſtrong as to ſingle Perſons; there being no ſingle Perſon, who would be eſteemed a *Chriſtian*, but he is in communion or fellowſhip with ſome Church, which he owns to be the true Church of *Chriſt*, and by whoſe Judgment he is willing to be concluded, as being a profeſſed Member of it; and as taking it for his Principle, that every Member of the true Church of *Chriſt* ought to be of her Judgment, becauſe the Scripture ſays, *She is the Pillar and Ground of Truth*: And though ſome boggle at this, yet nothing is truer than that every *Chriſtian* Society daily practiſeth it.

Now, the better to prepare the way for this intended Tryal, we will crave the Liberty firſt, to conſider *Chriſtianity* in the World

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in general, in its first Ages, when it was under Persecution for meer matter of Religion, and before it gained any civil Power and Dominion; From them we shall know what the true *Christianity* did teach: We will then consider *Christianity* in *England*, when divided only into two distinct Parties, *viz.* The *Protestants*, and the *Papists*: And in the last place, We will consider *Christianity* in *England*, when the *Protestants* were sub-divided into several Parties, *viz.* The *Episcopal*, or Church of *England Protestants*, the *Presbyterians*, the *Independants*, the *Anabaptists*, and the *Quakers*: and when the *Papists* were become so small, that they were upon the matter inconsiderable; and I suppose, from these differing times, we may hope for a reasonable Information.

First then, Suppose the question put to the *Christians* of the first and Primitive Times, in those first and greatest Persecutions, under which Christianity then suffered. *Is it lawful to Persecute, and to make and Execute Laws for the Inflicting of Pains and Penalties upon quiet and peaceable People, for Matters meerly of Religion*; and in particular, *For meeting together meerly for matter of Religion?* Doubtless, their Answer would have been given with one general Voice: *That it was not Lawful*; and that it was against the Rule of *Christ*, and the Law of Nature, *Quod Tibi non vis fieri, Alteri non feceris, Do not unto another, what thou wouldst not have done unto thy self.* And that true it is, the *Jews*, who Persecuted the Lord of Life, and put him to Death for matter of meer Religion, did alledge for their Justification, *That they had a Law*, and *that by their Law he ought to Dye*: But that that Law, and all Laws of that Nature, were against the Law of God: And that the *Christians had no such custom, nor the Churches of Christ*, is I think, a most undeniable thing.

These Ages (by the Agreement of all) were esteemed the purest Ages of Christianity; Religion being then most Pure, when the Professors of it were most Poor. And if any one shall conceive, that the *Christians* of those Ages would have given any other Answer, contrary to what I have here framed for them, and shall give a convincing Reason for such his Apprehension, I shall confess my mistake. In the mean time I must say, That I cannot see what other answer they could have given but

but what must have justified the Persecutions against themselves to have been innocent, on the part of the Persecutors, who believed those first *Christians* to Err in Religion, and to be Disturbers of the Peace, and Government of their Countries, and their Meetings to be unlawful Assemblies: And much more Innocent on the part of the inferiour Magistrates, who took care to put those Laws in Execution; they being as much obliged in all civil Respects, to put in Execution the Laws of their Superiours, as our Inferiour Magistrates are obliged to the Execution of our Laws; and they gave the same Reasons. And the same is to be said in the Case of the Persecution of our Lord Christ, as seems very clear from that Prayer, which he offered for his Persecutors: *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do*; here then is a Principle of Christianity undivided.

In the next place, We are to consider Christianity in *England*, when divided only into two distinct Parties, *viz. Protestants* and *Papists*, and when the *Protestants* had made a Sub division amongst themselves here. This I take to be in the times of K. *Hen.* 8. K. *Edw.* 6. Q. *Mary*, and part of the Reign of Q. *Elizabeth*; for though there were diversities of Opinions amongst *Protestants*, as well here as in other Countries, even in the first beginnings; yet they were not divided into Parties, being every-where upon the Defensive. In the time of K. *Hen.* 8. which I intend to instance in, both Parties were persecuted.

The Case stands thus: That King at his coming to the Crown, found the whole Nation in a quiet possession of Popery, and holding it as an Article of their Faith, and the Principle whereon they believed the Unity of their Faith depended, that, *The Pope was the Supream Pastor, and visible Head of Government next under Christ, of the Catholick Church of Christ, of which the then National-Church of* England *was a Member*: The King had defended this Article by Writing so vigorously against *M. Luther*, that the Pope had for that very work conferred upon him the Title of *Defender of the Faith*, to be enjoyed and used by him, and his Successors for ever. After this, by *Act of Parliament*, this Supream Pastor, this Visible Head was thrown off, and this King put in his place, so far as concerned the Church of *England*, by the

the Title of *Supream Head of the Church of England*, annexed to the Crown; and this by a Law, 26 *Hen.* 8. C. 1. And then by another Law, 26 *Hen.* 8. C. 13. it was Enacted, *That if any by Word or Writing, should attempt to Deprive the King of the Title of His Royal Estate, he should be adjudged a Traytor:* This change of the Headship of the Church, was, and is truly (at least in *England*) a *Protestant* Doctrine; and undoubtedly there is no *Protestant* whatsoever, but approves the casting off the *Popes* Headship, as conformable with the Doctrine of *Protestants*. And upon the latter of these two Laws, divers suffered Death for their denying the Kings Supremacy. This was the first step made in *England*, from *Popery* towards *Protestancy*.

And the Vigorous Execution of this latter Law, encouraged several *Protestants* from Forreign parts to come into *England*, not doubting but to have a Liberty to Exercise their Religion here; and it gave confidence to many of the Subjects of *England* to receive, and to others, to entertain good thoughts of *Protestancy*; being perswaded, that after the shedding of so much Blood, as had been shed here upon that Occasion, *England* would never any more admit of the Article of the Popes Supremacy; and consequently, would every day make greater steps from that Church, of which the Pope was owned to be the Supream Pastor.

And certain it is, that *Protestancy* upon this Occasion also made its entrance into *England*, and gained Ground here, and such (if not by open application to the King for that purpose, yet) at least in their Hearts desired a Toleration, and to be admitted to Preach, and Exercise their Religion here, without being Persecuted for their so doing; so that their Principle was at that time (at least) against Persecution for meer Religion. But *Protestancy* being now taken notice of to grow, another Law was made, 31 *Hen.* 8. for setling unity of Opinion in the six Articles therein named, by which the denyal of Transubstantiation, and several other Doctrines therein named, are Enacted to be punished with Death.

And now Persecution in *England*, for matters of meer Religion, grew sharp and high; so that it is observed by our Historians, that upon one and the same day, some who were Professed *Papists*, were put to Death for denying the Kings Supremacy which

which was a *Proteſtant* Article: And ſome who were profeſſed *Proteſtants*, were put to death for denying Tranſubſtantiation, which was an Article of the *Papiſts*: So that at this time, the Government could neither be ſaid to be *Popiſh*, nor *Proteſtant*, but both Parties were Perſecuted moſt ſeverely for matters of meer Religion: And he who ſhould then have ſaid to either Party, in juſtification of the Proceedings of the Magiſtrate in the Execution of either of thoſe Laws, That that Party did not then ſuffer for any matter of meer Religion, but for breaking of the Peace, in breaking of the King's Laws, would certainly have been taken not to have underſtood thoſe Laws, or the cauſe of their then Suffering.

And now, ſuppoſe each of theſe Parties ſeparately interrogated, when thus under Perſecution (for *Afflictio dat intellectum*,) Is it lawful to Perſecute, and to make and Execute Laws, for the Inflicting of Pains and Penalties upon quiet and peaceable People, for matters of *meer Religion?* (for it ſeemed a time to teach both Parties an Eternal temperance and moderation) moſt certainly, each Party in their then preſent Circumſtances, would have anſwered in the Negative, That it was not lawful: They would not have fallen into the debate to conſider what Religion their Perſecutors were of, whether of the *Popiſh* or *Proteſtant*, to the end, to have fixt the Cruelty and Injuſtice of Perſecuting for a matter of meer Religion, upon that Party, as a Principle of their Religion, which their Fancies ſhould have perſwaded them to have been the Religion of their Perſecutors.

The *Papiſts* would not have then ſtood formalizing that, becauſe the firſt Perſecution was occaſioned upon the denyal of the King's Headſhip over the Church of *England*, which was a *Proteſtant* Doctrine, in oppoſition to the Pope's Headſhip, which was the *Popiſh* Doctrine; therefore the *Proteſtants* were the Aggreſſors in the Perſecution; and therefore the Principle of Perſecution was a *Proteſtant* Principle; and the Perſecution of the *Proteſtants* afterwards, was no other than a juſt Judgment of God drawn upon the *Proteſtants* by themſelves, as a Conſequence of that Principle of Perſecution, which gave them the firſt occaſion of introducing their Religion nationally into *England*. Nor would the *Proteſtants*,

by way of Recrimination, have charged the *Papists* then, that because that King and the then Government were of the *Popish* Religion in every point, save only in the Article touching the Supremacy; therefore the Principle of Perſecution muſt neceſſarily be a *Popiſh* Principle: No, they would moſt certainly, each Party, have diſclaimed the Principle, as unwarranted by the Principles of true *Chriſtianity*, which each of them claimed to be theirs, and each of them would have agreed, that it was their common Principle, To do unto others as they deſired others ſhould do unto them. Here we ſee the Principle of *Chriſtianity* in *England*, when divided.

The Perſecutions before mentioned, being quieted by the Death of K. *Henry* the Eighth, and the Crown deſcending unto K. *Edward* the Sixth, an Infant of ſuch tender Years, as made him uncapable of Exerciſing the Government in his own Perſon, not being come to the uſe of right Reaſon; the Duke of *Somerſet* took upon him the Adminiſtration of all things, under the Title of *Protector*, and with him the *Proteſtant* Party had their ſole Intereſt.

Several Penal Laws were made in this King's Reign, for the Inflicting Pains and Penalties for matters of meer Religion, which gave occaſion to the *Papiſts* to charge upon *Proteſtants* the Principle of Perſecution for matters of meer Religion, as their Principle. It is true, the *Papiſts* were at that time Sufferers, and were actually Perſecuted by the then Government for matters of meer Religion: But true Charity might eaſily have found other Reaſons, unto which thoſe Perſecutions might warrantably have been Aſſigned; and there was certainly no neceſſity of Aſſigning them to any Principle of the *Proteſtants*.

The firſt Law which was made relating to theſe matters, was 1. *Edw.* 6. C. 1. touching the Lord's Supper, Entituled, *The Penalties for ſpeaking againſt the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Chriſt, or againſt the receiving thereof in both kinds*. This ſeems to have no other tendency than barely to keep both Parties from falling together by the Ears, and the *Proteſtants* were more likely to fall under the Puniſhment of this Law, than the *Papiſts*: None could ſay, That it was the effect of Intemperate Spirits; for though it directed Communion in both kinds, to ſuch as deſired to Communicate; yet it compelled not any perſon to communicate. And it had a

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Clauſe of great Temperance in the very cloſe of it, in theſe words; *Not condemning hereby the uſage of any Church out of the King's Majeſties Dominions.*

The next Law of this Nature, was made in the ſame Parliament, *viz.* 1 *Edw.* 6. C. 12 it is Entituled thus, *viz. Statutes concerning Treaſons*, &c. *repealed*: and this cannot be denyed to be ſharp againſt the *Papiſts*. It makes it highly Penal to affirm, *That the King is not, or ought not to be Supream Head on Earth of the Church of* England *and* Ireland, *or any of them immediately under God, or that the Biſhop of* Rome, *or any other Perſon or Perſons, other than the King of* England *for the time being, is, or ought to be, by the Laws of God, Supream Head of the ſame Churches, or any of them*: But there is no neceſſity or reaſon of aſcribing this neither to any *Proteſtant* Principle, though it is ſuppoſed to be made in affirmance of a *Proteſtant* Principle.

Another penal Law was made 1. and 3. *Edw.* 6. Entituled, *The Penalty for not uſing Uniformity of Service and Adminiſtration of Sacraments.* And in 3. and 4. *Edw.* 6. C. 10. was made an Act, *For the aboliſhing and putting away of divers Books and Images.* Both which were ſevere againſt the *Papiſts* in matters of meer Religion; yet do I not find any neceſſity, why the Perſecutions, which theſe Statutes occaſioned, ſhould be imputed to any *Proteſtant* Principle.

During the whole Reign of this Infant King, it is clear, that the *Papiſts* in ſome degree ſuffered Perſecution from the Hands of the *Proteſtants*, for matters of meer Religion: And without doubt, had it been then demanded of the *Papiſts, Whether ſuch Perſecutions and ſuch Laws Enacting ſuch Perſecutions, were lawful, and agreeable with the Principles of true* Chriſtianity, *which they pretended to maintain*? their Anſwer would have been in the *Negative*: And they would then with one accord have readily agreed, *That Perſecution for matters of meer Religion, was no more conſiſtent with the Rule of Chriſt, requiring us, To do unto others, as we would that others ſhould do unto us, than Murder and Robbery.*

But the Perſecutions Inflicted upon the *Papiſts*, by the Law made in the time of King *Edward* the Sixth, did not laſt long; they ended with his Life; and by the deſcending of the Crown to Queen *Mary*, the *Papiſts* were releaſed from all their Sufferings. All the Laws made againſt them in the Times of *Hen.* 8. and *Edw.* 6.

were Repealed. But the caſe was altered with the poor *Proteſtants*, whoſe Sufferings were ſo great, and are ſo ſharply and juſtly reflected on, even to this day, that I, who love not to aggravate any thing, eſpecially that carries its own aggravation with it, will ſay no more of them, but beg of our good *God*, to fill us with mercy in place of revenge, and to forgive them as we would be forgiven. Sure I am, had any *Proteſtant* been asked his Judgment in that Age, touching the Principle of Perſecuting for matters of meer Religion, he would have diſclaimed it, as abſolutely contrary to the Principles of his Religion, which is the point that I am labouring to Evince. And after all this, ſhall any one take it ill, if upon a Principle of Charity I ſhall profeſs, that I could never as yet ſee any thing offered, which in my poor apprehenſion did neceſſarily Evince; *That Perſecution for meer Religion, was even an avowed Principle of either ſide.*

The Bloody Fury of Perſecution, under which the *Proteſtants* ſuffered ſo miſerably in Q. *Maries* time, did end with her Reign, which was but ſhort. And after that, the *Proteſtants* never ſuffered more from the *Papiſts*. But upon the death of Q. *Mary*, the Crown coming to Q. *Elizabeth*; and ſhe thereupon declaring her ſelf a firm, a zealous, and to all intents, religiouſly a *Proteſtant*, the Edge was turned againſt the *Papiſts*, before any differences were diſcerned to be among the *Proteſtants*. Several of the Popiſh Clergy ſuffered Perſecution, ſome even unto Death in ſeveral parts of the Kingdom: And new Laws were from time to time framed and multiplyed for thoſe purpoſes. And if now we ask the Opinion of the *Papiſts*, as to Penal Laws, either Sanguinary or others, and Perſecutions, for meer matter of Religion; they will tell you, (and they continue in that proteſtation even unto this day) *That all ſuch Laws and Perſecutions are unlawful, and againſt the Principles of the Goſpel.* And though the *Proteſtants* under ſeveral changes, have been in the poſſeſſion of thoſe Laws, and have at times more or leſs Executed them; yet (ſo far as I can find) they do not own Perſecution for matters meerly of Religion to be their Principle, or ſo much as lawful.

After the *Papiſts* had ſome time continued the alone-Perſecuted Party for Matters of Religion, ſeveral Differences, in Matters meerly of Religion, happened to divide the *Proteſtants* into

into distinct and separate Parties, during some part of the Reign of *Queen Elizabeth*; and also during the several and successive Reigns of King *James*, and King *Charles* the First: And about the beginning of the Reign of King *James*, some few desperate Male-contents, professedly of the Popish Religion, being found Guilty of a wicked Plot, whereby they had designed the Destruction both of that King, and of his Parliament, by Gun-Powder (for which they were deservedly Executed) several new and more severe Laws were then, and at several times after, made against the *Papists* in general, by which several Punishments were Inflicted on them for Matters of meer Religion; and several Penal Laws were also made, by which the then Governing *Protestant* Party, (then, and still distinguished by the Name of the *Church of England*, or the *Episcopal Party*) persecuted Them.

The Dissenting *Protestants* of all sorts were Prosecuted under the general Name of *Non-conformists*, who cryed aloud for *Liberty of Conscience*, and declared it absolutely Unlawful to Punish any, for Matters of meer Religion: The refusal of which, bred bad Blood in the Kingdom, and we all know what followed.

During the continuance of the War, and after King *Charles* the First was not able to make Head against the *Non-conformists*, the *Non-conformists* Retaliated the Church of *England*, and not a little crushe the *Popish* Party, both having engaged on t'other side, and being of other Religions, esteemed themselves Persecuted for matter of Religion.

That War being ended with the Death of King *Charles* the First, and the expelling of our late King out of his Dominions, and the Ruine of *Episcopacy*, and the Suppression of the *Papists*, and the total Change of the Government; the *Non-conformists* under the several Forms, took upon them and kept the Government, until the late King was by the Divine Hand of Providence restored to his Crown: During all which time, the *Episcopal* Party and the *Papists* Suffered, more or less, for matters (at least in their Apprehension) meerly of Religion. But these two Parties were not alone in their Sufferings; for during those Bloody contests, there appeared another Party, which from its very first rise in this Kingdom, hath been severely Persecuted,

ſecuted, and that only for Matters of Religion. This Party was the People called *Quakers*. They did at their firſt ſhewing themſelves in the World, go under the name of the *Children of Light*, becauſe they aſſert, as their main and firſt Principle, *That* Chriſt *is the True Light that Enlightens every Man and Woman with a meaſure of ſaving Light*; *which all ought to obey on pain of Damnation*; but by one *Bennit*, an Officer, in 1650. were nick named *Quakers*. They Profeſſed themſelves to adhere to the plain Principles of the firſt *Chriſtians*, and particularly to hold it as their Principle, *That all Perſecution whatſoever, againſt any Party, People or Perſon whatſoever, for matters meerly of Religion, is abſolutely Unlawful, Unrighteous, and againſt the Spirit and Will of God, and Doctrine of true Chriſtianity*. And to give them their due, they have been true Contenders for their Principle, both by their frequent Apologies and Remonſtrances on the one hand, and Invincible Patience in Suffering on the other hand.

Upon the Reſtauration of the King, the *Epiſcopal* Party was alſo Reſtored. The *Presbyterians*, *Independants* and *Anabaptiſts*, expected a general Toleration in matters of Religion, according to ſome of the King's Gracious Letters, as a Reward for their helping or not oppoſing His Reſtauration. The *Papiſts* alſo expected the ſame thing, as a reward for their Loyalty in adhering to the Crown. The *Quakers*, now a great People, grew confident of the like Freedom, becauſe of their Inoffenſiveneſs to Government. But inſtead of this expected Liberty; all the former Penal Laws made in the time of Q. *Elizabeth*, K. *James*, and K. *Charles* the Firſt, were Revived, and ordered to be put in Execution, as well againſt all *Non-conformiſts*, who were *Proteſtants*, as againſt the *Papiſts*. And new and more ſevere Laws were made againſt them all: And by theſe reſpective Practices we ſee, what all theſe Parties have done when they had Power.

I think ſuch as underſtand the Tranſactions of our Country, will clear me from having made any miſtake as to matters of Fact, in any thing that I have here ſaid, touching paſt Perſecutions; though I believe there will not want ſome, who will either think me miſtake

taken in the point of Charity, when I profeſs to believe that I do not think there is any one Party now in *England*, who holds it as a Principle of their Religion, *That it is Lawful to Perſecute*, or to make or Execute Laws for the Inflicting of Pains or Penalties for any matters of meer Religion: Or elſe they will ſuſpect, I do not in Truth believe what I here profeſs to believe in this point, ſince even what I have ſaid as to matters of Fact before urged by my ſelf; it plainly appears, that there is not one Party now in *England* (the People called *Quakers* only excepted) who profeſs themſelves *Chriſtians*, but have been notoriouſly Guilty (more or leſs) of the very Fact, or (at leaſt) of a publick allowing, if not abetting of it: And every Party will be apt to cenſure me of Singularity (at leaſt,) ſince each Party thinks that they have Arguments drawn from Facts, ſufficient to fix this ugly Doctrine, as a Principle, upon that Religion which they hate moſt. O that the *Man* could prevail againſt the *Beaſt*! and that we would permit our Paſſions to give way to our Reaſon, to conſider things nakedly, and as they truly are, *Si ſatis eſt accuſâſſe, Quis erit Innocens?* If to accuſe be a ſufficient Conviction, what Party ſhall be able to clear it ſelf? And who knows not, that 'tis a *Chriſtians* part to Suffer, but never to Perſecute?

I very well know, That the *Proteſtants* in general, who look upon the *Papiſts* as their common Enemies, do in their Pulpits, in their Writings, and in all their Addreſſes to the People, charge them with thoſe Rivers of Blood which ſtreamed in the times of Q. *Mary*, and with the Bloody Intentions which thoſe ill Men had in their Hearts, who were engaged in the wicked Powder-Plot: That the firſt was done by Authority, and chiefly by the *Popiſh* Biſhops: That the other, though the Fact but of private Perſons, was never condemned by Authority; and Silence is an implyed conſent and approbation. Do we well conſider, what the *Papiſts* offer by way of Extenuation in anſwer to theſe Charges? they juſtifie none of theſe Facts: But as to the firſt, they recommend to us to be conſidered, the circumſtances that Q. *Mary* was in, when ſhe came to the Crown. All the chief Heads of the *Proteſtant* Party, had ſet up and Proclaimed the Lady *Jane* duly

duly Queen, in oppoſition to Q. *Mary*, their Lawful Soveraign. They had raiſed an Army againſt her: She was compelled to gain her Right by Force: She was a Conqueror: And if we will believe them, ſhe had not given any Articles, which might have obliged her to Pardon any who were guilty of this Uſurpation, and Treaſon: She was told, It was a Confedracy of the whole Party of the *Proteſtants*, which gave her a ground to ſuſpect, that the *Proteſtants* held it for a principle, That it was lawful for them to take up Arms againſt, and Depoſe their Lawful Soveraign, if of a Religion contrary to him.

She might, by the Laws then in being, (the ſame which we have to this day in force amongſt us) have taken away the Lives of all who were any ways Guilty of endeavouring to Depoſe her: She did not make any one new Perſecuting Law, (which is conſiderable) by which any of thoſe were taken off who were put to Death. But being put into fears by her Council; that without making great Examples of Juſtice in all parts of the Kingdom, ſhe would be in danger of having new Inſurrections made by the *Proteſtants* againſt her; ſhe was perſwaded that the only way to prevent the ſheding of more Blood for the Future, was to puniſh conſiderable numbers of thoſe who had then actually broken the old Laws of her Kingdom. Her Biſhops (and that is the chief and juſteſt ground of the charge) had their Fears and Revenge alſo, in particular: They were newly reſtored to their Biſhopricks, and Religion, of which they had been diſpoſſeſſed in the Time of King *Edward* the Sixth; They were afraid of being again diſturbed; and theſe fears and paſſions made them take wrong meaſures. They perſwaded the Queen, that ſhe might as well make Examples of Juſtice, and prevent future Inſurrections, by puniſhing thoſe for their Religion, who had been Guilty of Treaſon, as if ſhe had puniſhed them for Treaſon: And they urged, that by this way ſhe ſhould do her ſelf the greater right: and give a proof to the World, that ſhe was more offended with Treaſon committed againſt Heaven, (for ſo they eſteemed *Proteſtant* Religion) than with Treaſon committed againſt her ſelf, which might be interpreted Revenge. They had forgotten the Principles of the true *Chriſtian* Religion, which required to leave unto God to Revenge whatſoever

ever Injuries are done to him, and to leave it to God to judge, what Injuries were done to him; *They did not now think of doing unto others as they would that others ſhould do unto them:* They did not remember the wiſe advice of *Gamaliel*, before mention'd, but giving Ear only to their own Fears, and preferring Humane Policies before Goſpel-Rules, they miſled the Queen, and took away the Lives of vaſt numbers of ſuch, againſt whom nothing could be charged, but what was matter of meer Religion; thereby giving a Juſt occaſion to charge upon their own Religion the Principle of *Perſecution* for meer Religion, which thoſe who now profeſs that Religion here, do pretend to diſown and abominate.

And as to the buſineſs of the *Powder-Plot*, they pray us to obſerve, that it was the Treaſon, not of the *Papiſts* of *England*, but of a few, particular perſons of Deſperate Fortunes and worſe Conſciences, and not without ſuſpition of being drawn into the Snare by their Enemies: That upon the moſt ſevere Scrutiny which could be made into that buſineſs, it clearly appear'd, that the number of the Offenders was not greater than what happens ſometimes to be engag'd in a particular Burglary, and not ſo many as make up the fourth part of a Foot Company of Souldiers: That the Villany of that deſign hath been as fully and generally, yea, and as publickly decry'd, condemn'd and reprobated by the whole party of *Engliſh Papiſts* of that Age, and of all ſucceeding Ages, as any thing can be by a Party in *Perſecution*, who have not ever had any opportunities or allowances to act in any caſe otherwiſe then each perſon of the party only in his private Capacity might do: and they Appeal to the Juſtice of thoſe who profeſs to have the greateſt Averſion of all others againſt the Religion of the *Papiſts*, whether they will admit it as a rule, that the Villanies of ſome private perſons, who profeſs themſelves to be in Fellowſhip or Communion with any Church or people, calling themſelves *Chriſtians*, may in Juſtice, and ought in Reaſon to be charged as proceeding from the Principles, Doctrines, or Religion of that Church or people with which private perſons profeſs to be in Communion or Fellowſhip? They cry out, God forbid any ſuch Rule ſhould have credit in the World.

On the other side, I am not ignorant, that the *Papists* who Esteem the *Protestants* in general as their mortal Enemies, by whom they apprehend themselves to have been depriv'd of what is most dear unto them, from the time that the *Protestant* Religion first gain'd a Preheminency in *England*, are as highly Uncharitable towards the *Protestants*, as these are severe in their Censures towards them. They have almost look'd upon the *Protestants*, as the *Israelites* did upon the *Egyptians*; They charg'd upon them the guilt of all Blood that hath been shed, of all the Persecutions which have hap'ned for matters of meer Religion, since the first Act of *Parliament* of that nature, made by King *Henry* the VIII unto this hour: Intinuating, that what was so Cruelly Acted by Q. *Mary*'s Bishops, was occasion'd by the Provocations given in the time of King *Edward* the VI. and warranted (as far as ill Acts can be warranted,) First, by the *Non-conformists* Retaliations towards the Church of *England*, when subdu'd by them upon the Death of King *Charles* the I. and then by the Retaliation made to the *Non-conformists* by those of the Church of *England*, since the Restoration of our present Soveraign.

In short, as the *Protestants* in general, to excuse and justifie themselves, labour to cast *Persecution* for matters of meer Religion upon the *Papists*, as a Principle of *Popery*; so the *Papists* are as Industrious to perswade the World, that it is a Principle of *Protestancy*.

I might here by way of Apology and Extenuation refer the *Papists*, as they do the *Protestants*, to consider of Circumstances of times and things which occasion'd their Severities against them, as the unrulines which might probably be amongst the people in the time of K. *Edw.* the VI. to see their Religion alter'd as they conceiv'd, by the *Protector*. And in Q. *Elizabeth*'s time, besides the rensentment which the *Protestants* had of the Cruelties which were exercis'd against them in Q. *Mary*'s time, It is certain, the *Papists* did not look upon Q. *Elizabeth* to have any Right to the Crown; she having been declar'd by the Judicial Sentence, and judgement of Arch-Bishop *Cranmer* to be Illegitimate; and the Marriage between K. *Henry* VIII. and *Anne* of *Bullen* her Mother, being by the same Sentence declar'd absolutely

ſolutely void *ab Initio*, and that Sentence confirm'd by Act of *Parliament*, 28 *Hen.* 8. c. 7. So that the *Papiſts* took Q. *Mary* of *Scotland* to be the Rightful Heir to the Crown, and Rightful Queen, and Q. *Elizabeth* was conſtrain'd by great neceſſity to keep them under; but Apologies are not proper to be made on the behalf of thoſe, who have the Authority towards thoſe who are ſubjected.

And as the *Proteſtants* in general, and the *Papiſts*, reproach'd each other, reciprocally charging upon each other, that *Perſecution* for matters of meer *Religion* was a Principle of each others *Religion*; ſo did the *Epiſcopal Proteſtants*, and the *Non-Conformiſts*: The *Epiſcopal Party*, who firſt *Perſecuted* the *Non-conformiſts* under the general Name of *Puritans*, or *Preſbyterians*, affirm'd, *That their firſt beginners in* Scotland, *from whence they deriv'd themſelves, did more than any Party upon Earth Perſecute others for matters of meer Religion, and had gain'd a Power by their Uſurpation, Oppreſſion and Perſecution; being a ſort of people who wanted the very Eſſentials (as they ſaid) of Religion,* viz. *A Right Ordination, without which (as they alleadged) there could be no True Church, no True Miniſtery, or True Sacraments: And that, therefore they ought by Penal Laws, timely made, to be prevented from making Diſturbances in* England. The *Puritans* to juſtify themſelves, denying *Perſecution* for matters of meer *Religion* to be their Principle, or to be lawful, labour'd to fix it upon the Church of *England* as their Principle, and as taken up by them from the *Papiſts*. And as to the particulars charg'd upon thoſe of *Scotland*, they ſaid, *That whatſoever thoſe of the* Reformation *had done in* Scotland, *was approv'd and abetted by Queen* Elizabeth *and the* Proteſtants *of* England, *without whoſe Advice nothing in* Scotland *had been Tranſacted, and without whoſe Aſſiſtance things had not been ſo Effected*: They further ſaid, as to the point of *Ordination*, *That the Church of* England *ought not in Reaſon, to account* Epiſcopal Ordination *to be ſuch an Eſſential of Religion as they charged, for that if no* Ordination *could be valid but by* Biſhops, *that then it would follow, that no* Ordination *could be valid but from True and Rightful* Biſhops *of the True Church of Chriſt; and then the* Ordination *of the Church of* England *would be as invalid as*

the *Ordination* of those of *Scotland*; for the Church of *England* could make out no *Succession* of Bishops, but through the *Popish Church*, which both parties (as well those of the Church of *England*, as those of *Scotland*) had condemned and agreed to be a *False Church*, and no *True Church* of Christ, but an *Harlot* and *Anti-christian*.

Thus the *Episcopal Protestants* and the *Puritans* charged and recriminated each other; the *Episcopal* Party nevertheless making good their ground, so long as they had the Civil Power to support them; but when upon the Death of K. *Charles* the I. the *Non-conformists* gain'd the *Civil Power* into their Hands, the *Church of* England *Party* (like all Parties oppress'd) being under *Persecution*, together with the *Papists*, for matters of meer *Religion*, *Did absolutely condemn all such Persecutions as Unlawful.* And then the *Non-conformists* (who were at that time sub-divided, and branch'd out into several other Parties) gave occasion to charge them with the Principle of *Persecution* for meer *Religion*, and put them to use the same Arguments to clear themselves, as the *Episcopal* Party and *Papists* had respectively before made use of, when the Government was in them, to prevail with the World to believe that they abhorr'd the Principle of *Persecution* for meer *Religion*; and that the *Persecutions* us'd by them, were not for any matters of meer *Religion*, nor in Truth *Persecutions*, but purely Acts of *Prudence*, and doing right to themselves by a just care to keep the *Episcopal Party* and the *Papists* out of all possibility of *Persecuting* them any more for the future.

But none of them could find any reason of that Nature to excuse the *Persecutions*, which they us'd towards the people called *Quakers*, they could not charge them with ever having *Persecuted* any Party or Person: Yet in Fact, both the *Non-conformists* and the *Episcopal* Party did *Persecute* them in their turns; and therefore to prevent being charged for persecuting a quiet People for matters of meer *Religion*, They pretended sometimes, that the *Quakers* were all *Mad-men*, and that they Imprison'd them only to keep them out of the way, and to preserve them in peace: And those who had gotten the *Government*, would upon that Title claim the right of judging what persons were *Mad*, as they

they did always of judging what was *Truth* and what *Errour*. At other times they pretended to puniſh the *Quakers* as Blaſphemers, and the Perſecutors being the only Judges of what was Blaſphemy under their Government, they might make what they pleas'd Blaſphemy. When they grew aſham'd of this Charge, they then pretended, that the *Quakers* were conceal'd *Papiſts*, and that every one who ſpoke or utter'd any thing in their Meetings (whether *Man* or *Woman*) was a *Jeſuit* Diſguis'd. It was clear, that the *Quakers* ſuffer'd highly, and it was as clear, there could not with any ſhew of Truth be any thing charg'd againſt them, but what was matter of meer *Religion*.

Now upon the whole Buſineſs, what ſhall ſuch a perſon judge of theſe matters, who eſteems himſelf in danger of being judged by God, if he ſhall make any raſh Judgment? Shall we take for a ſufficient ſolid Proof, the Charge of an Exaſperated Enemy, againſt an Enemy who hath provoked him, and this in a matter of ſo great a Concernment, as to render not a ſingle Perſon, but a whole Party unworthy to live? This were to judge againſt the Rules of common Juſtice and Righteouſneſs, as well as to Sin againſt Charity: And this way of judging would render each Party (the *Quakers* only excepted) to be Guilty, and to give a juſt Title to each Party, where it hath the poſſeſſion of Power and Government to put to Death all of the other Parties.

For though we in *England* ſhould refuſe to admit the Charge of the *Papiſts* here to be a ſufficient proof againſt the *Proteſtants* in ſo great a matter; yet let us not deceive our ſelves ſo far, as to ſuppoſe that in *Popiſh Countries*, the Charge of *Papiſts* againſt *Proteſtants* would not be taken to be at the leaſt as valid, as the Charge of *Proteſtants* will be taken to be againſt *Papiſts* here. Shall we go another way, and ſay, that in regard every Party takes it ſelf to be the only good and true *Chriſtian*, and in regard we ſee every Party, when in Power, practiſing this thing, and perſecuting the other (when in their Power) for matters of meer Religion, that therefore every Party agrees in this? *That it is Lawful for thoſe who are the true* Chriſtians, *to Make and Execute Penal Laws againſt ſuch as are Erroneous* Chriſtians, *and to Inflict Pains and Penalties upon them for matters of meer Religion*, that

that is, for Errors held by them as Doctrines of Religion: But neither will this be reasonable or convenient; for this will also give Title to those who have the *Actual Power*, and are in the possession of each respective Government in the *Christian* World, to put to Death, and destroy all within their respective Jurisdictions, whom they judge to be *Erroneous Christians*: And this will be also to Entitle the Civil Magistrate in every *Christian Country*, to the absolute and uncontroulable right of judging between *Truth* and *Error*, so as to have no appeal from his definitive Judgment; and to entail against common Sense an *Infallibility* in the *Civil Magistrate* of every *Country* of determining in matters of *Faith* and *Religion*: *I say, against common Sense; for* Christianity *teacheth us, that there can be but one true Faith; and if this Power of judging should be allow'd to the Civil Magistrate*, there would be as many *Faiths* as there are *Governments* amongst *Christians*: That would be true Faith in one Country, and the denyal of it punishable with *Death*; which in another Country would be an *Error* and a *False Faith*, and the affirming of it punishable with *Death*.

It would also be to justify not only what the *Papists* in *England*, but what both the *Papists* and *Protestants* in all other parts cast as a Charge upon our *Nation*, *That the only Rule of Faith in* England, *is the Parliament of* England; *that nothing is true* Christian Doctrine *in* England, *nor any Translation or Sense, or Interpretation of Scripture, a true Translation or Sense, or Interpretation of Scripture in* England, *but what is judg'd so to be by the Parliament of* England. Whereas, though in the *Statute* made 2, 3 *Edw.* 6. c. 1 Entituled, *An Act for the Uniformity of Service and Administration of the Sacraments throughout the Realm*: It was affirm'd by that Parliament, *That the Book of Common-Prayer enjoyn'd by that Statute to be us'd, was made by the Aid of the Holy Ghost*: Yet that very *Book* was by that very *Parliament* alter'd and amended, as appears by Statute 5 *Edw.* 6. C. 1. And it hath received several *Reformations* and *Amendments* since, and was in and by a *Parliament* in Q. *Marys* days, judged to be *Heretical*.

As to my own Judgment in this particular Affair, it leads me to another way of reasoning and discoursing; I do, and I think I

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am bound in Charity to believe that every Person and Party who professeth *Christianity*, do at least intend to be what they profess, and that they do all in their Hearts fully give consent unto all those common Doctrines of *Christianity*, which, as standing Principles of that pure *Religion*, were never question'd or deny'd by any sort of *Christians*, such as are those which I have before observ'd, *Of doing unto others, as we would have others do unto us, and of not doing Evil, that Good may come of it*; and those others of *Loving our Neighbours as our selves*; *yea, and of Loving our very Enemies, and doing good to them that who hate us and use us despightfully*: All which, when soberly consider'd, without Passion or Humane Interest, are expressly against all *Persecutions* for matters of meer Religion, and do not only tye up *Protestants* from destroying of *Protestants*, but even from Persecuting of any sort for any matters of meer *Religion*: as those Commands, *Thou shalt do no Murther*, *Thou shalt not Steal*, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*, are against and tye up all *Christians* from shedding of Blood Unlawfully and Malitiously, and against *Rapine* and *Uncleanness*. And such do also in their Hearts believe, that whatever Counsel or work is of man, will fall of it self; and that what is of God will stand Maugre all the *Persecutions* and Oppositions of man; and that there is none of them do intend to fight against God, or would willingly be found so doing. All this being taken by me in my own Thoughts, to be most certainly true, when ever I come to enquire, How then can these things be? How can all these Parties (among which there are great numbers of Good, Sober, Judicious and Sincere persons) offend against these common Principles of the common *Faith* of all *Christians*, by making and Executing *Penal Laws* for matters of meer *Religion*? *Immediately adjoyning* to this another Question, which is, And how can so many persons, professing to be *Christians*, take revenge by Blood, usurp the Goods of their Neighbours, and commit the Sin of *Uncleanness*! Yet all these were once done by that great and good King, and Prophet, who was *a Man after God's own Heart*. That which to me Answers this latter Question, seems clearly to solve the former; That the *Beast* gets the better of the *Man*; The *Passions* commit a force upon *Reason*; And Humane Frailty, being too weak, brings the best of men

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ſometimes (though but for a time) and careleſs men oftentimes to contradict their *Faith* by their *Practice*, until by Afflictions they gain underſtanding, and come to *Repentance* for the Saving of their Souls. This to me ſeems ſo evident a Truth, that, until ſomething more evident ſhall convince me of my being miſtaken in this, I ſhould think it as great a Sin againſt *Charity*, for me to charge it as a Principle of the Religion of any Party (profeſſing to be *Chriſtians*) *That Perſecution for meer Religion is Lawful*, becauſe I ſee it practis'd by thoſe who have Power amongſt that Party, as to charge the ſame Party, to hold it as a Principle of their Religion, that Murther, Theft and Adultery are Lawful, becauſe great numbers of that Party, are too often guilty of the practice of thoſe Sins.

If this way of conſidering things be not found unreaſonable, but upon due reflection, ſhall appear to be conformable to the true Principles of *Chriſtianity*, and the *Holy Rules* and *Doctrines* of Chriſt, I hope thoſe who are publick perſons, will forgive me when I wiſh they would lay it to their Hearts, and think well, whether it would not be of uſe to preſerve this poor *Nation*, from the further guilt of thoſe additional *Injuſtices*, and *Cruelties*, which the contrary way of raſh Judging muſt involve, and daily do involve us in.

Is it not more calm Judgment to ſay, That the *Diſordinate Paſſions* of K. *Henry* the VIII. hurried him into thoſe *Cruelties* which he committed, than to impute them to the *Principles* of any *Religion* which he profeſs'd? Is it not more becoming us to ſay, that an over-zealous Paſſion of *Fears* which our firſt *Reformers* had in the time of K. *Edw.* the ſixth, made them apprehend, that they could not put *Popery* out of its Poſſeſſion otherwiſe than by force, and conſequently led them unwarily into practices, which were contrary to their *True Faith*, then to admit the Charge laid on them by the then Perſecuted *Papiſts*, *That Perſecution for meer Religion, was the firſt* Proteſtant Principle, *upon which* Proteſtancy *laid its firſt Politick Foundation in* England? Were it not more Ingenious, to attribute the *Cruelties*, which were inflicted in Q. *Mary*'s time, to the *Paſſion* of *Fear* in that Queen, and of *Fear* and *Covetouſneſs* in her *Biſhops*, that nothing could ſecure her againſt *New Rebellions* from the *Proteſtants*, nor

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fix the Biſhops in their re-gain'd Poſſeſſions, but Examples of the utmoſt rigour, then to labour to fix thoſe Barbarous Cruelties as a Principle upon the Religion of the Queen? Is it not more Charitable to aſſign all the harſh Laws made and executed in the times of Queen *Elizabeth*, King *James*, and in the ſeveral ſucceeding times ſince by the Government avowedly *Proteſtant*, to the Fear, Ambition, Revenge, or other frail Paſſions, cover'd generally under the ſpecious Titles of *Reaſon of State*, then to give the World a juſt Ground to charge thoſe Crueltie; upon a Principle of *Proteſtancy*. This we muſt do, or (which is as much to our Diſhonour) we muſt give a juſt Ground to the moſt Civiliz'd Nations of the World, to charge thoſe paſt Barbarities, exercis'd ſo long in *England*, upon the People of our Nation, to the Cruelties of our *Engliſh Natures*: For what other thing can *Forreign Nations* impute it unto, when they ſhall obſerve the ſame Perſecution continued for near one hundred and forty years, under all the various *Forms of Religion* which we have had, each Party renouncing the Cruelties to proceed from any Principle of the Religion own'd by that Party, yet exerciſing in *Fact*, what they renounce to be their *Faith*.

But my Charity doth not reſt here, it compels me to make yet one ſtep further; and ſince it is not to the Diſhonour of our Nation, I hope none will be diſpleas'd with it. As I am verily perſwaded, that all thoſe *Penal Laws*, which have been made in this our Nation for the inflicting of Pains and Penalties for matters of meer Religion, have not had their Original from any Principle of any of thoſe Religions which have been profeſs'd by any of thoſe Powers or Governments by which they were made, but ought to be imputed to the Paſſions of thoſe who made, and caus'd them to be put in Execution: And that a falſe Reaſon of *State*, or zeal in *Church-men*, gave thoſe Paſſions leave to work even againſt the Religion which every Party Perſecuting, Profeſs'd; ſo do I moſt confidently believe, that the True Principles of the common *Chriſtianity*, which every Party own'd, and true Reaſon of *State* grounded upon thoſe true and commonly own'd Principles, reſtrain'd all and every the reſpective Parties, by whom thoſe Laws were made, from all Intentions of having all, or any of thoſe Laws rigidly Executed; ſo that

thoſe who had from time to time, and who ſtill have the Executive and Interpretative Power of thoſe Laws veſted in them, have always underſtood, and do ſtill continue to underſtand thoſe Laws not to have been intended by the Legiſlative Power to be *ſtrictly* and *rigidly* or *conſtantly executed*: My Reaſon is, that had this been otherwiſe, All of All Parties, except one, who at ſome time had been in Power, muſt have been e're this totally Butcher'd or deſtroy'd, and our poor Country ſo far Depopulated as to have become a Prey to ſome of our Potent Neighbours: For even in Queen *Mary's* times, thouſands eſcaped that never fled; and had private Meetings, but the moſt Eminent were Cruelly uſed.

I know ſome there are who have imputed the remiſs Execution of theſe unkind Laws to the Generous Good Nature which is found in the generality of our Nation, which abhors Cruelty, and hath always a compaſſion for thoſe who are under Perſecution; and which well appears to any who reflect upon the tenderneſs of our Courts of Juſtice, and of the generality both of our Magiſtrates, and our Juries in all the Countries in *England*, and how they have comported themſelves under the ſeveral Circumſtances of paſt Times, when they have been call'd upon, and Provok'd, yea Threatn'd, and endeavour'd to have been forc'd into a Spirit of Perſecuting.

Others there are, who have taken the great unwillingneſs in all ſorts of perſons to be active in the Execution of theſe Laws to proceed from the innate zeal that is in every *Engliſh* man to preſerve the Liberties and Properties of their Fellow Subjects, as well as their own; and that they have obſerv'd, that Liberty and Property were never any way ſo much Entrench'd upon, violated and deſtroyed, as by theſe Cruel Laws of Perſecution for meer Religion: So that every man conſidering when he ſees his Neighbour (though differing in Judgement from himſelf) Perſecuted and deſtroyed for what ought to be call'd rather his miſtake then his Fault (for no man can believe againſt his Judgement, or take an Oath againſt his Conſcience without ſin) that though this be his Neighbours turn this year, it may be his own turn the next year, or next Reign; and no mans Life, Liberty or Property can be ſecure in caſe ſuch Laws be Executed;

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but only such men, who have a Conscience fitted for all Changes of Government, and for every Religion that is uppermost, and who for that reason are as unfit to be Trusted by their Neighbours as by the Government.

But though I take it to be very true that this natural inclination to Mercy and pity, and this real zeal which all men have for the preserving of Liberty and Property, may have been great helps to keep off, or mitigate the severe Execution of these Laws of Persecution for meer Religion; yet when I well consider the great power and Influences which the Supreme Authority always hath upon the Subjects; and particularly upon all the Magistrates in general, who are always persons nominated and appointed by the Supreme Authority; and must be therefore suppos'd to be such in whom the Supreme Authority always Confides, as to the due Execution of what the Supreme Authority intends to have Executed; I think it will Naturally follow, that a forbearance of the rigid Execution of these Laws, ought to be chiefly imputed to the Religion and true *Christian* policy of the Supreme Authority; and we ought to believe, that though a false Reason of State did sometimes permit Humane Frailty, to make such Laws as were contradictory to the true Laws and Principles of that very Religion which those persons professed, by whom those Laws were made; yet true Religion, and true reason of state always kept those persons from intending to have those Laws rigidly and severely Executed.

I will confirm this by one single Instance of the highest Nature, and that not in the best of times.

The last *Popish Priest* that was put to Death in *England* for being a *Priest* of the *Romish Church*, was put to Death in the time of *Cromwel*; I suppose, we are not to doubt of the Passionate heat which inflam'd those who were then in Authority against the *Papists* and *Popery*; they look'd on the *Papists* as mortal Enemies to their Government, and as fast Friends, and devoted Servants to the Crown and Royal Family: Notwithstanding which, when the said *Priest* came upon his Tryal at the *Sessions-house* in the *Old-Baily* in *London*, and upon his Arraignment, Pleaded that he was not Guilty of *Treason*, but acknowledg'd himself to be a *Priest* of the *Roman Church*: It clearly ap-

pear'd, that thoſe who were his Judges, did their utmoſt to preſerve his Life, and to prevent the Execution againſt him of thoſe Laws upon which he ſtood Indicted: For they did for many hours ſuſpend the Recording of his Confeſſion, making it their endeavour to prevail with him to Plead *not Guilty* to the Indictment: They preſſed him to this in the publick Court, aſſuring him, that if he would ſo Plead, his Life ſhould be ſafe; and that they had no Evidence which could prove him to be a *Prieſt*. And when the Old Man (Aged about ſeventy two years) would not be drawn to deny himſelf to be a *Prieſt*; (taking it to be a denying of his Religion) and that the Court was compell'd to give Judgment againſt him; the Magiſtrate who gave the Sentence, was ſo drown'd in Tears upon that ſad occaſion, that it was long before he could pronounce the Sentence, which the Law compell'd (as he profeſs'd) to give. Now I ask, can it be preſum'd that in thoſe ſevere times againſt *Popery*, thoſe who then ſate upon the Seat of Juſtice, would, or durſt have proceeded thus in a publick Court, and made it their buſineſs ſo openly, ſo avowedly to have ſav'd the Life of a *Prieſt* of that Party, if they had not well conſider'd that the Makers of thoſe Laws, and even *Cromwel*, who had then taken upon him the Government of theſe Nations, did not in Truth intend a rigid and ſevere Execution of thoſe Laws, which were for Inflicting Pains and Penalties for matter of meer Religion?

But I think, I need give no further Inſtances for the proof of this my Opinion: Whoſoever ſhall reflect upon the preſent *Genius* of our whole Nation, and conſider in what deteſtation all men have the Execution of Perſecuting Laws for matters of meer Religion, how publickly Informers are Abhorr'd and Diſcountenanced, when they labour to Perſecute any upon any ſuch Law, will eaſily ſee that the whole Nation in general is Convinc'd, that thoſe Laws were never any of them made, with intention to have them rigidly Executed. I have been told, (and it ſeems to be grounded upon Reaſon) that it is a Principle of our Laws, *That even an Act of Parliament, which is againſt the Law of God, or againſt Reaſon, is void in it ſelf*; If this be true (as methinks it ought to be) I think we are very near the time, wherein all our preſent Laws of this Nature, by which

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any are ſubject to be in any meaſure Perſecuted for matters of meer Religion, will be Repealed by the general Voice of the whole Nation, and that when the particular Perſons, of which the great Body of this Nation is compos'd, ſhall have conſidered ſomething more deliberately, than their Paſſions have yet permitted all to do, that every Law of this Nature is againſt the Liberty and Property of the Subjects of *England*; Unjuſt and Cruel, in puniſhing men for not proceeding againſt their Conſciences; Expreſly againſt the very Principles and Rules of the Goſpel of Chriſt, and Principles of that true Religion which every one of us pretends to own; Deſtructive to the Trade and Well-being of our Nation, by Oppreſſing and driving away the moſt Induſtrious Working Hands of our Nation, and Depopulating, and thereby Impoveriſhing our Country, which is capable of imploying three times the number of People which we now have: Contradictory to the Rule of Juſtice, grounded upon common Reaſon as well as Religion, which requires, *That no man ſhould do unto another, what he would not have done unto himſelf*, And conſequently void in it ſelf by the Rule of the Laws of our Country: There will not be found a Magiſtrate, nay, a common Subject in *England*, who will not as poſitively renounce the putting in execution, or being acceſſary to the executing of any Law of this Nature, as he will renounce the becoming guilty of thoſe deteſtable Sins of Murder or Theft.

But until Men are a little further convinc'd of theſe Truths, you (Sir) ought not to be angry with, but rather pity thoſe Magiſtrates from whoſe Hands you have lately ſuffer'd for a Matter meerly of Religion: Peradventure they did not fully conſider that the Matter with which you were charged, was a thing of meer Religion, but took your Meeting in an Aſſembly meerly for the Worſhip of God, *to be an unlawful Aſſembly*, becauſe prohibited by a preſent Law, as the poor Magiſtrates in the Apoſtles times took their Meetings in their Aſſemblies meerly for the Worſhip of God, to be unlawful Aſſemblies, and Breaches of the Peace, becauſe they were prohibited by their Laws: Or perhaps their fear that they ſhould themſelves be ſubject to a Forfeiture, in caſe they ſhould have deny'd their Warrant to the Informer, made them fall under that Humane Frailty for ſecuring

curing of themſelves. However it was, I ſuppoſe you have no juſt Ground to believe the thing to be any effect of Malice againſt you or your Friends; and if it be not, then the ſame Magiſtrates, now their fear is over, may yet be inſtrumental to do you and themſelves Right. It is Odds but upon a ſtrict Reflection upon what the Informer hath ſworn, the Devil may have prevailed with him to ſwear ſomething which may be proved untrue; for Informers are not ſqueamiſh in ſwearing for their own profit, as it hath appear'd in *London* and *Middleſex*, and one point of Perjury proved, will invalidate all his Teſtimony, and reverſe all that is done: At which I am very confident no Man (beſides the Informer) will be diſpleaſed. And this is in plain Truth the great Reaſon why your Friends here deſire to know all the Circumſtances of your Caſe; the certifying of which, may be an Advantage to your ſelf and your Friends there, and will be particularly very welcome unto

Sir,

Your Old True Friend

And Humble Servant,

A. N.

Poſtſcript.

Postscript.

I *Have here omitted many of those great Arguments, both which others have used, and which may yet be advanced from the Nature of this Subject, partly because there are so many* Discourses *extant, and partly because* English *mankind begins to be satisfied in the Matter. Yet this give me leave to add in general, That Force upon Conscience, and Corporal Penalties about Matters of Religion, have not only no President or Example from Christ or his Apostles, but are expressly against both their* Precepts *and* Examples.

This Coercion is the old Disturber of States, the Destroyer of Property, the Depopulator of Kingdoms, the Enemy of Humane Nature, of Kind Neighbourhood, and of Conscientious Religion. At best it either maketh men Religious by Rote, *which is* no Religion, *or* Conformable for Fear and Interest, *which is* Ir-religion *and base* Hypocrisy. *But besides all this, it corrupteth and distracteth the Nature of all* Civil Government, *by making the measure of* Loyalty, *not* Love, Honour *and* Obedience *to* Cæsar, *but* Conformity *to the Clergy and Religion in Fashion; which destroys the true Dependence and Obligation in Government, and subjects the Lives, Liberties and Estates of the People to the frequent Revolutions of Religion; which ought to stand fixed and Sacred upon the common and undeniable Principles of Civil and Just Government.*

I hope I shall be excus'd for this Conception, *since of all others,* This renders to *Cæsar* the things that are *Cæsar's*: *And I would to God, all the* Cæsars *of the World saw the Truth of this* Notion: *They would not then suffer themselves to be* grown upon, *not only by another Power then* Cæsar's, *but by a Power* contrary *to* Cæsar's, *and which in the tendency of it leaves* Cæsar *nothing but* His Name. *Let Him be felt King of all His People, by His Goodness, as well as by His Power.* Optimus *went before* Maximus *among* Infidels; *and shall Pretenders to the best of Religions* (Christianity *I mean*) *decline it? All Creatures Nourish and Defend their Young: We are the Children of the Government, and should be Comforted and*

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Defended under the Magiſtrates *Wing of Juſt Power and Favour: He ſhould Endeavour our Encreaſe, Encourage our Induſtry, and thereby Enrich and Replenish the Kingdom, not Impoveriſh and Depopulate it. For* the Glory of a Prince is in the multitude of his People: *Not* Beggars, *but* Men of Induſtry. *But who dares to be Induſtrious, that would not have his Labours made the* Forfeit *of his* Sober Conſcience? *UNHAPPY AGE!* Come! *'tis time for Humane Nature to remember from whence ſhe came, for Mankind to* Love, *for* Cæſar to be kind to all His People; *To let his Rain fall upon all, his Sun-ſhine upon all, that he may juſtly render Himſelf Maſter of the* Affections *of all; and not ſerve* Factions *nor* Intereſt, *nor imbroile his Government with the Opinionary Differences about Religion, which doth not Enlarge, but* Narrow *His Empire: And thoſe that put him upon ſuch Meaſures, let their Pretences be what it will, they are too narrow for his Glory, and do* Ill Offices *in the great Family of the Kingdom. They ſet the* Father againſt the Son, *and excite him to Diſ-inherit his Children, and thoſe* Virtuous too, *meerly for the ſober Exerciſe of a Diſenting Conſcience, about matters relating to t'other World: This is* Practiſing Reprobation for Opinion, and ſacrificing Nature and Morality to Modes of Religion: *Nay, this is to* Engroſs *Cæſar* by a Party, and to Monopolize Him from the reſt of His People; *A ſin againſt the very Nature and end of Government. God grant us all more Wiſdom, more Honeſty, and more Charity, and that we may yet live to ſee* all Induſtry encouraged, the Poor employed, the Kingdom in Love with its own Growths, Virtue only rewarded, Vice only puniſhed, that *Righteouſneſs, Peace* and *Plenty* may yet vouchſafe to dwell amongſt us. So be it to *Cæſar* and His people, while the Sun and Moon endures.

THE END.